

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 264736
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 264736

NODIS
FOR AMBASSADOR FROM THE SECRETARY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XF, US

SUBJECT: MIDDLE EAST CONSULTATIONS

1. WE HAVE REACHED A CRITICAL STAGE IN OUR EFFORT TO RE-
CONVENE THE GENEVA MIDDLE EAST PEACE CONFERENCE. IT IS
POSSIBLE THAT THE FRENCH COULD BE HELPFUL TO US AT THIS
POINT IN BRINGING THE SYRIANS OVER THE LAST HURDLE TO
GENEVA. I RECOGNIZE THAT THERE WILL BE FRENCH SENSITIVITIES
ON THIS, SINCE THE FRENCH ARE NOT A PARTY TO GENEVA AND HAVE
NOT BEEN INCLUDED IN THE NEGOTIATIONS UP TO THIS TIME. BUT
IN VIEW OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ISSUE I WOULD LIKE YOU TO
SEE GUIRINGAUD OR THE HIGHEST OTHER FRENCH OFFICIAL AVAIL-
ABLE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

2. WE HAVE BRIEFED THE FRENCH QUITE FULLY ON OUR WORKING
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PAPER AND HAVE GIVEN THEM A COPY OF IT (STATE 247917,
OCTOBER 15, 1977). WE BELIEVE THE WORKING PAPER WAS A USE-
FUL EXERCISE AND HELPED ACHIEVE AGREEMENT ON SEVERAL POINTS.
BUT OUR APPRAISAL ON STUDYING THE COMMENTS RECEIVED FROM
THE ARABS IS THAT IT IS PROBABLY IMPOSSIBLE TO GET AN
AGREED TEXT, PARTICULARLY SINCE WE ARE DEALING NOT ONLY WITH
ARAB-ISRAELI DIFFERENCES BUT WITH QUITE DIFFERENT APPROACHES

AMONG THE ARABS THEMSELVES. FURTHER DEBATE OVER PROCEDURES IS NOT LIKELY TO ADVANCE US SIGNIFICANTLY AND RISKS CAUSING

A SERIOUS LOSS OF MOMENTUM TOWARD GENEVA. IN ANY EVENT, WE THINK ENOUGH COMMON GROUND ALREADY EXISTS TO ENABLE THE PARTIES TO PROCEED TO GENEVA ON THE FOLLOWING UNDERSTANDING: A LETTER WOULD BE SENT FROM THE CO-CHAIRMEN NOTIFYING SECRETARY GENERAL WALDHEIM THAT THE PARTIES HAVE AGREED TO MEET AT GENEVA; THE LETTER WOULD STATE THAT THE ARAB PARTIES HAVE AGREED TO FORM A SINGLE DELEGATION INCLUDING PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVES; IT WOULD STATE THAT THE CONFERENCE PROCEDURES FOLLOWED IN DECEMBER 1973 SHOULD GOVERN THE RECONVENED CONFERENCE; IT WOULD DESCRIBE THE WORKING GROUP STRUCTURE AS BILATERAL EXCEPT FOR THE WEST BANK AND GAZA, AND THE REFUGEE QUESTION, WHICH IT IS GENERALLY RECOGNIZED LEND THEMSELVES TO A MULTILATERAL APPROACH.

2. THIS PROPOSAL DOES NOT FULLY MEET SYRIA'S REQUEST FOR MULTILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS ON THE ISSUES OF PEACE, WITHDRAWAL AND THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION, OR THAT THE PLO BE DIRECTLY REPRESENTED AT GENEVA. BUT WE BELIEVE THAT SYRIA'S ESSENTIAL CONCERNS CAN BE MET ON BOTH ISSUES. OUR PROPOSAL TO FOLLOW THE 1973 PROCEDURES SHOULD GO A LONG WAY TOWARD SATISFYING SYRIA'S CONCERN REGARDING THE STRUCTURE OF THE CONFERENCE. BEFORE THE 1973 CONFERENCE
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ADJOURNED, SECRETARY GENERAL WALDHEIM ANNOUNCED IN A CONSENSUS STATEMENT THAT THE WORKING GROUPS WOULD SUBMIT THEIR REPORTS TO THE CONFERENCE PLENARY; THIS IS THE PROCEDURE WE PROPOSE BE FOLLOWED IN THE RECONVENED CONFERENCE. FURTHERMORE, THERE IS NOTHING TO PREVENT THE ARABS FROM STATING THAT NO AGREEMENTS REACHED WILL COME INTO FORCE UNTIL AGREEMENT HAS BEEN REACHED ON ALL ASPECTS OF A PEACE SETTLEMENT, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN ASPECT. ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION, THE DIFFICULTY OF COURSE IS THAT IT IS AS POLITICALLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT TO AGREE TO THE PLO'S BEING REPRESENTED AT GENEVA AS IT IS FOR THE ARABS TO SAY THAT THE PLO SHOULD NOT BE REPRESENTED AT GENEVA. EACH SIDE IS GOING TO HAVE TO BE ABLE TO SAY THAT IT HAS NOT ABANDONED ITS PRINCIPLES IN THIS RESPECT WHILE FINDING A PRACTICAL WAY TO START TALKING. WE HAVE PROPOSED A PRAGMATIC FORMULA WHEREBY PALESTINIANS COULD BE SELECTED WHO COULD EFFECTIVELY REPRESENT PALESTINIAN VIEWS WITHOUT FORCING ISRAEL TO SIT DOWN WITH THE PLO, WHICH THEY WILL NOT DO.

3. WE HAVE PROPOSED TO PRESIDENT SADAT, KING HUSSEIN

AND PRESIDENT ASSAD THAT THE PARTIES NOW AGREE TO GO TO GENEVA WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY, LEAVING REMAINING PROCEDURAL PROBLEMS TO BE RESOLVED AT THE CONFERENCE. WE BELIEVE WE ARE CLOSE TO GETTING ARAB AGREEMENT ON THIS APPROACH, BUT

SYRIA'S REACTION WILL BE CRUCIAL. QUITE FRANKLY, WE ARE CONCERNED THAT SYRIA, BY A HESITANT OR NEGATIVE RESPONSE, COULD CAUSE US TO LOSE THE BEST CHANCE THAT THERE HAS BEEN IN MANY YEARS TO GET NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE PARTIES WHICH CAN LEAD TO A FINAL SETTLEMENT OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT. WE RECOGNIZE THAT THE PROPOSAL TO AGREE TO GO TO GENEVA WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY DOES NOT SATISFY ALL OF SYRIA'S DESIRES ON PROCEDURE (NOR, FOR THAT MATTER, DOES IT ISRAEL EITHER). BUT WE BELIEVE
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THAT SYRIA'S ESSENTIAL CONCERNS CAN BE MET, IF IT WILL AGREE TO ATTEND THE CONFERENCE.

4. A BREAKDOWN OF NEGOTIATIONS WOULD INEVITABLY LEAD TO RISING TENSIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST THE CONSEQUENCES OF WHICH COULD BE DISASTROUS. FRANCE CAN MAKE AN IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION AT THIS CRITICAL JUNCTURE. WE WANT TO ASK WHETHER PRESIDENT GISCARD WILL SEND A MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT ASSAD, IN WHATEVER WAY HE DEEMS APPROPRIATE, GIVING HIS SUPPORT FOR OUR PROPOSAL TO CONVENE GENEVA WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY. A WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT FROM GISCARD TO ASSAD COULD BE IMPORTANT IN HELPING ASSAD TO GIVE HIS AGREEMENT TO GENEVA.

5. IN MAKING THIS PRESENTATION YOU SHOULD SAY THAT WE ARE NOT APPROACHING ANY OTHER EUROPEAN GOVERNMENT ON THIS MATTER. WE ARE ASKING PRESIDENT GISCARD'S ASSISTANCE BECAUSE OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S PERSONAL RESPECT FOR HIS STATESMANSHIP AND BECAUSE WE KNOW THAT FRANCE, WITH ITS IMPORTANT ROLE AND VITAL INTERESTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND HISTORICAL TIES WITH SYRIA, SHARES OUR DEEP CONCERN FOR PEACE IN THAT REGION.

6. YOU SHOULD SAY WE TRUST FRENCH WILL KEEP OUR EXCHANGE ON THIS IN CLOSE CONFIDENCE. VANCE

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